GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1503
ANSWERED ON:03.03.2006
RURAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to strengthen, upgrade and expand communication networks in the remote rural and tribal areas of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether several areas in the country through technically feasible have not been provided with telecommunication facility till date;

(d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(e) whether TRAI has suggested creation communication infrastructure in rural areas;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether the services of private telecom providers are proposed to be utilized for this purpose; and

(h) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Following steps are being undertaken to strengthen, upgrade and expand communication networks in the remote rural and tribal areas of country: -

(i) Provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in all the remaining uncovered eligible villages, excluding villages having less than 100 population, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc.

(ii) Provision of Rural Community Phones (RCPs) with population more than 2000 and where there are no Public Call Offices (PCOs).

(iii) Replacement of Multi-Access Radio Relay (MARR) VPTs by landline/Fixed Wireless Terminal phones.

(iv) Provision of Rural individual phone connections (RDELs) in 1685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).

(v) Upgradation of C-DOT telephone exchanges to Access Node Rural Automatic Exchange (ANRAX) and Single Base Module (SBM) exchanges to Remote Switching Units (RSUs) in rural areas.

(vi) Relaxation of the outdoor cable norms to 5 kms as against the earlier norm of 2.5 kms for landline exchanges.

(c) & (d) There are 49,640 villages without telecommunication facility having more than 100 population and not lying in naxalite infested areas/thick forest areas, as on 31.12.2005. USOF has entered into agreement with BSNL for provision of Village Public Telephones in these 49,640 remaining unconnected villages by November 2007.

This includes provision of satellite connectivity for 14,183 villages lying in remote and inaccessible areas. A state wise list of these villages is given in the Annexure.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) The salient features of recommendations inter-alia include following: -

Shared infrastructure for mobile services to receive support from USOF

Supporting backbone infrastructure through USO fund.

Shift from subsidy for individual DELs, VPTs etc.

Discount in Annual License Fee and Spectrum Charges linked with Rural Coverage.

Development of suitable applications.

Reduction of rural VSAT license fees and spectrum charges and provision of transponders at affordable rates.

No right of way charges for networks in rural areas.

Niche Operators to be supported from USOF and exemption from spectrum charges.

No spectrum fees for usage of CorDECT and similar technologies in rural areas as well as for usage of 450 MHz.

No prior SACFA clearance for deployment of towers upto 40 m. in rural areas.

Funds collected as Universal Access Levy should be made available to USOF.

The full text of recommendation is available at TRAI`s website at www.trai.gov.in.

(g) & (h) The services of all telecom service providers will be utilized and wide ranging consultations have been held with Access Service Providers, Infrastructure Providers, Association of Telecom Service Providers and Manufacturers to work out modalities for sharing of certain elements of infrastructure and to provide support from Universal Service Obligation Fund for the same. Elements of infrastructure which can be shared include land, tower, shelter etc.

ANNEXURE

STATE-WISE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VILLAGES TO BE PROVIDED WITH TELEPHONE FACILITIES AS ON 31.12.2005

Sl. No.	Name of the Service Area	No. of villages to be provided with VPT
1	Andhra Pradesh	837
2	Assam	6565
3	Jharkhand	1664
4	Gujarat	2179
5	Himachal Pradesh	768
6	Jammu & Kashmir	1533
7	Madhya Pradesh	7492
8	Chhattisgarh	4151
9	Maharashtra	4252
10	North East-I	2051
11	North East-II	1520
12	Orissa	4899
13	Rajasthan	8054
14	Uttaranchal	3675
Total		49640